



Standard Operating Procedures

MISSION STATEMENT

With your help, we take in & provide nourishment and care for homeless animals & find lifelong matches in permanent homes. We coordinate regionally on wellness programs, cruelty investigations & population control with extensive community awareness, outreach & education. We are the community resource and advocate for all animals.

- Very hard rubber chewable toys. Kong toys, if the appropriate size is given to each dog, are too rigid to be chewed into pieces.
- In addition, volunteers should be encouraged to use “dog walk time” to its greatest advantage and as much more than simply the chance to eliminate.
- Individual exercise opportunities should average 15-20 minutes, including leash time, talking, petting, and interactive play. Active “people time” allows an outlet for mental AND physical energy through focused, interactive play.
- By focusing on a specific task (repeatedly returning a ball, Kong, or Frisbee; playing “hide-and-seek” with treats or toys, etc.), dogs are able to expel much more pent-up mental and physical energy in a limited amount of time and space. Therefore, they greatly reduce stress due to confinement, isolation, and boredom.

Here are some basic health and safety requirements for dog and puppy toys:

- Toys must be easily and thoroughly able to be disinfected, or be disposable after single use. Disinfect toys before giving to another animal using the procedure used to disinfect dishes.
- Toys must be of sturdy construction and appropriate materials so that they pose no danger if ingested or damaged.

Play groups

When at all possible introduce dogs into “play groups” keeping your safety and their safety in mind. Dogs should meet each other while both leashed and held by a trained person. Walking dogs side by side allowing them to interact at their own pace is preferred. Once dogs appear to get along they may be allowed to play in our large play area with supervision. Ultimately, they may be housed together if space is needed and they appear to be happy together. We hold organized play groups three days per week with trained staff attendants overseeing each group. This keeps our dogs socialized and happy.

EUTHANASIA POLICIES

DECISIONS

We are an open-admission, full service shelter, which means that any animal in need of shelter and care is welcome here. We offer all animals a refuge, regardless of whether we believe that animal is adoptable. We are dedicated to preventing animal suffering and cruelty and to providing quality care for every animal.

Humane euthanasia of animals is a practice acknowledged by most animal protection organizations as a necessary means for alleviating or preventing suffering due to the surplus of animals. Euthanasia is not a decision we take lightly, but one we must make nonetheless.

We sincerely wish that every animal that comes to us could be adopted to a caring, responsible home. Unfortunately, there aren't enough quality homes for placement. We evaluate the health and temperament of each animal on an individual basis. We use our experience and protocol to evaluate an animal's needs and balance those needs with the greater good of the animal population in our care. Since euthanasia may be the final act of kindness that can be shown to an animal, it is policy that animals be handled with respect and compassion, protected from fear and pain.

THE DECISION MAKERS

It is critical for staff and volunteers who do not make euthanasia decisions to understand the pain, emotion, and guilt associated with this role. The decision-makers face a difficult task, and their selections must be respected, even if they are different from your own.

We strive to be compassionate, fair, and professional as we accept the responsibility for managing the homeless animals that enter our shelter each year. Making euthanasia decisions is difficult and emotional for those who must choose. Determinations regarding some animals are clearer than others. To assist the staff who must perform that role, criteria are listed below that may help in those arduous choices.

Evaluations

Each animal who comes to us is evaluated in entirety; taking into account both behavior and medical conditions. Euthanasia must be considered:

- When an animal is suffering mentally or physically with a poor prognosis, facing a long and painful recovery, or incurable illness
- When an animal is deemed to pose an unacceptable danger to other animals, itself, or the public

We also recognize the adoptability of animals in shelters may be impacted by:

- Temperament
- Previous history
- Age
- Health, body condition
- Ability to cope with kennel stress
- Breed, size, potential lack of proper housing within shelter
- Foster care resources, human resources, budget
- Requirements ordered by the courts or mandated by law

Our evaluation process assesses an animal's behavior, temperament and health. The evaluation process helps assess an animal's behavior and health. This information is used to determine if an animal is healthy, treatable, or unhealthy/untreatable:

- Animals that rate high in the evaluation are "Healthy and adoptable".
- "Treatable" animals may be borderline but could respond with treatment.
- "Unhealthy" animals are clearly sick or are unsafe for the community.

Information from former owners if available should be reviewed to assist in decisions. The behavior and health evaluation is included in the decision making process. Lastly, observations from animal care attendants caring for the animals daily should be taken into consideration. Management reviews euthanasia decisions daily. When there are conflicts about a euthanasia decision, the management team will review the case and make a final decision. Staff members must bring questions about euthanasia decisions directly to their managers.

Daily Walk-Through Process

Management walks through the shelter daily to double check each animal's health and, if necessary, select animals for euthanasia, taking into account the animal's condition, behavior assessment and adoptability. On occasions when there are health issues that are unclear there is a consultation with the Veterinarian to help determine whether or not an animal may be saved or should be euthanized.

- If an animal is sick or it is showing signs of an oncoming illness, the animal is moved to the isolation area for that species, notations are made on an animal's kennel card and in PetPoint to the type of illness and its severity.
- If the animal is adoptable and space is available, medication may be offered and documented by the Veterinarian.
- If an animal's illness is contagious (i.e. it may infect the entire kennel or human health) or if the animal is suffering, that animal may be selected for euthanasia.
- Animals with positive Parvovirus, panleukopenia and Feline Leukemia tests are euthanized in many cases.

NOTE: Although an animal may be considered for euthanasia, if euthanasia is not immediate and the animal can be kept comfortable, the animal is still given medications to increase his or her comfort and reduce pain.

Stray Animals

Strays are kept for 5 days before we can make the decision to place the animal up for adoption, or consider euthanasia. However, if the animal is suffering due to severe injury or illness, the animal may be euthanized before hold period ends with a manager or veterinarian's approval. Records must be clearly noted with the medical reasons for euthanasia.

If the animal is neither ill nor claimed, the animal will be prepared to move to adoption.

Stray Animals Euthanized before Stray Period or Brought in Dead on Arrival (DOA).

When an animal is euthanized before the stray period expires:

1. Place a hold tag on the body bag with the date of euthanasia and a description of the animal as well as location it came from.
2. Communicate the information to the lobby in case an owner comes in looking for that animal.
3. Take a photo of the animal. If an owner comes they may question the reason for early PTS. It can also save owners from having to view the body for the sake of identification. The photo doesn't have to be uploaded into PetPoint but make a note in PetPoint that a photo was taken and just leave that photo in the camera for a reasonable amount of time.
4. If the animal is taken to an emergency clinic and euthanized at the clinic, it is FHS staff responsibility to take the picture and tag the body.
5. Any DOA's picked up are handled in the same manner.

Owner-surrendered Animals

An animal surrendered by its owner may be kept for 24 hours if intake staff feels that the owners may have a change of heart. We will never do this if the animal is suffering. As long as the owners have signed the surrender form, the animal may be processed for adoption or euthanasia immediately.

Owner requested euthanasia

Flagler Humane Society will euthanize animals belonging to citizens requesting this service. There are fees involved for this service. Appointments are preferred. This service is performed immediately upon the animal's arrival. Owners are encouraged to stay with their pet and are counseled regarding the process. There may be occasions when a pet owner requests euthanasia but the staff member receiving the animal feels that it is adoptable. The employee may discuss this with the owner and may consult a manager. If the owner has a reasonable motivation for their request, the animal should be euthanized. If the staff and manager feel that there is no basis for the owner's decision, we may politely decline. Keep in mind that if the pet owner is being unreasonable and is unwavering in their quest for the animal to be put down, there are worse things that they could do to the animal. Do not turn any animal away that could be in danger.

Alternatives

Because many breeds have breed rescue groups (herein referred to as adoption partners), purebreds are not to be euthanized without first attempting to place the animal with them. All efforts must be exhausted before euthanizing any animal. However, if the animal is aggressive or ill, he or she may be euthanized without consulting an adoption partner.

Alternative options will always be reasonably explored for animals initially accepted for adoption but that fail to continue to meet the criteria for adoptability. Some examples of options to pursue include cooperating with other facilities and assisting with appropriate foster care. The shelter works with many reputable adoption partners who may also be able to assist.

Criteria for evaluating animals for euthanasia

Animals can be considered for euthanasia if:

- their injuries or illness is untreatable
- treatment is cost prohibitive for the average person (i.e. severely broken bones, broken backs, and extensive burns)
- keeping the animal alive would result in pain or a poor quality-of-life

Other circumstances may also affect euthanasia decisions:

- If a veterinarian has noted that an animal has a serious illness, that animal is to be selected for euthanasia over a healthy animal.
- If an animal is suffering, euthanasia is to be performed on the same day. Staff must advise the veterinarians immediately of any sick, injured, or suffering animal.

- If the animal has an injury or condition that is painful but not life-threatening, he or she is to be medicated to relieve the pain. However, if evaluating for space reasons, injury or illness may be considered a reason for euthanasia.

Animals in Adoption Area

Euthanasia decisions must be made when there are animals in the stray area of the shelter that are adoption candidates and need to move to adoption. Animals that have been in the adoption area that may fall in one of these categories may need to be considered for euthanasia:

- Dogs whose behavior is becoming worse: i.e. leaping up, trying to escape, trying to bite, and charging the gate.
- Dogs that have been up for adoption for weeks/months with no interest and are becoming lethargic, aggressive, or barrier aggressive.

Aggressive Animals

Any animal regardless of its size, sex, or breed that is known to be aggressive or exhibits signs of aggression towards people or other animals may be euthanized. Determination of aggression can be made from past history, day-to-day interaction with the staff and volunteers, and through a behavior evaluation. Although we do not discriminate by breed, we are even more cautious when considering the adoptability of the larger, stronger dogs.

Aggression includes:

- defensive and threatening behaviors
- actual attacks
- lunging at humans
- baring teeth
- exhibiting other characteristics that may make it a poor family companion for the average adopter

Fearful animals should be placed in a quiet cage, with the front covered with a towel, and then re-evaluated after they have been given time to relax. A fearful animal might do well if housed in an admin office, with management approval.02...

Wildlife

Generally, most wildlife comes to us orphaned or injured. If the animal can be raised or rehabilitated, a licensed wildlife rehabilitation facility or rehabilitator is located.

Summary

Euthanasia is an emotional and heart-wrenching process for those involved. It's a decision no one wants to make or carry out. But, we also know there isn't another option unless the animals are housed indefinitely in a cage or kennel off-premises. Quality-of-life is our guiding principle. We don't believe in warehousing animals for the sake of saving their lives.

We hope for a day when animals are no longer euthanized for space or lack of homes. Our educational and veterinary programs are attacking the problems at the source with aggressive spay/neuter, wellness clinics, education and adoption programs. Until that time comes, we have assumed the responsibility of humanely euthanizing those animals that have found no home.

EUTHANASIA TECHNICAL PROCEDURES

Each animal is to be treated with kindness and compassion during their stay here, during the euthanasia process and even after death their bodies are to be treated with respect.

Euthanasia must be performed in accordance with Florida State Statute 828.058 which states that only sodium pentobarbital or a sodium pentobarbital derivative may be used for lethal injection and shall be used in the following order of preference:

1. Intravenous injection

2. Intraperitoneal injection
3. Intracardial injection after animal is properly anesthetized

An animal may be tranquilized or anesthetized prior to lethal injection if necessary.

Sodium pentobarbital is a schedule II barbiturate. Injection of sodium pentobarbital is the method of choice because it meets all of the criteria in the AVMA Model for Euthanasia:

- Painless w/out physical distress
- Minimal anxiety or emotional stress
- Speed, reliability to induce unconsciousness
- Aesthetic process, should not be disturbing to view
- Legal compliance, must be used according to state & federal guidelines
- Safety for personnel, public and environment
- No health limitations, will work regardless of state of health animal is in
- No age limitations, may be used on newborns through elderly animals
- Portability, should be able to use in remote locations
- Efficient use of staff time
- Easy maintenance of equipment, supplies
- Ease of administration
- Economical

Florida Statutes require that anyone, other than a veterinarian who performs euthanasia be certified through a 16 hour state approved course.

The euthanasia room must be well lit and separate from other areas. It must be free from interruptions, free from loud noises, free of any non-essential staff and free from other animals. Animals should not be exposed to other animals before or during the euthanasia process.

Identification and Authorization

Once it has been determined that the shelter has no better option than to euthanize, begin checking to be certain that the identity of the animal is correct and that the animal is clear to be euthanized.

- Scan thoroughly multiple times with a universal scanner that is in good working order.
- Double check for tags or tattoos.
- Match the cage card up to the animal while checking the ID number on the collar.
- Check PetPoint for memos or holds.
- Check lost reports
- Three sets of initials from management or tech staff are required to authorize euthanasia.

Dosage and Administration

The proper dose of most brands of sodium pentobarbital for dogs and cats is 1ml per 10 lbs. if given IV. When administered IP that dose is tripled. Dosages vary from species to species. For example, dosages for rabbits and reptiles are double that of a dog or cat. A veterinarian should be consulted before euthanizing any species that we are not trained specifically on.

The preferred route of administration is:

1. Intravenous (IV)

- a. Into the cephalic vein (on the top surface of the front foreleg)
 - b. Into the femoral vein (on the inside of the thigh)
 - c. Into the saphenous vein (on the outside surface of the rear leg)
2. Intraperitoneal (IP)
 - a. Into the open space surrounding the abdominal organs
 3. Intracardiac (IC)
 - a. Into the heart, which is surrounded by a web of nerves and is a pain sensitive area - ***MUST ONLY BE DONE ON COMPLETELY ANESTHETIZED ANIMAL!***

Pre-euthanasia Anesthetics

Pre-euthanasia anesthetics are used when an animal is fractious and difficult to safely control. This is called chemical restraint. The drug of choice is actually a combination of drugs. Ketamine which is a schedule III narcotic is mixed with Xylazine, a tranquilizer. Ketamine/Xylazine is prepared by blending 10 parts Ketamine with 2 parts Xylazine. Combining the two drugs lessens their negative side effects.

Never substitute drugs for gentle, careful handling.

For dogs and cats the dose of the Ketamine/Xylazine is 1ml per 10 lbs. given intramuscularly. Animals will be sensitive to noise and light so cover the cage with a blanket or towel. They should be relaxed enough that they may be given the sodium pentobarbital IV injection within 2 or 3 minutes. If you wait until they are completely anesthetized you may give an IC injection. Check the blink reflex which is also called the palpebral reflex by touching the inner corner of the animal's eye. This is the last reflex to go so if the animal does not blink, it cannot feel anything.

Florida statutes mandate that no animal may be left unattended between the time the euthanasia process begins and death is confirmed. This would include times when anesthetics are administered.

Animal Handling

Euthanasia must be performed with an experienced animal handler.

Handle-able cats may be gently scruffed for IV injections; the handler then uses their other thumb as a tourniquet around the animal's front or rear leg.

- Kittens may be held gently with their belly facing the technician for IP injections.
- Feral cats should be gently and quickly dealt with in a net, trap or cage.
- Handle-able dogs are given a bear hug where the handler holds the dog's mouth away from themselves and the injector. The handler then uses their other thumb as a tourniquet around the animal's front leg.
- Non handle-able dogs may come around with lots of patience (see animal handling safety). As a last resort a trained handler may place a catchpole on a fractious dog for an intramuscular injection of pre-euthanasia anesthetics. Immediately after the injection is given, the catchpole should be removed so that the animal may peacefully fall asleep.

Remember - THE BEST RESTRAINT IS THE LEAST RESTRAINT. Over restricting or trying to over control the animal may cause the animal more stress and bring out a fight or flight response. Oftentimes a third person there to just distract the animal with chest rubs or tasty treats can make the process completely stress free for the animal which in turns lowers staff stress and keeps the situation safe for all.

The Process of Euthanizing

Before the animal is restrained the technician should have enough drugs drawn up that if there are any problems ie: the animal becomes aggressive or the vein blows, they have everything they need to go to plan B or plan C, which might mean giving a fresh injection of sodium pentobarbital into the other leg or anesthetizing the animal.

As the animal is held and comforted as described above, the technician pulls the front leg taught and rubs an alcohol swab over the top surface of the foreleg. When the vein is visible the needle is injected bevel up and the technician aspirates, hoping to see a flash of blood which indicates that the needle is indeed in the vein. When that occurs, the sodium pentobarbital is injected.

If administered properly via an IV injection an animal will lose consciousness immediately with death occurring within a minute or two after loss of consciousness.

For tiny puppies, kittens and smaller animals an IP injection is the route of choice, due to the difficulty in locating tiny veins. The tech draws up 3ml per 10 lbs. of animal and locates the peritoneum by looking at the umbilicus. The needle is injected just off to the side of the umbilicus at a 45° angle toward the upper half of the animal's body. The tech then aspirates and should get a vacuum which indicates that the needle is in the peritoneum. The injection is then given. The animal may either be placed back in its carrier or held quietly while it falls asleep. With an IP injection an animal will lose consciousness within minutes. Death may take several minutes.

It is not uncommon to administer a small additional dose of sodium pentobarbital via IV or IC injection after the animal has lost consciousness. This will speed up the death process.

Signs of death include lack of respiration; pupils fixed and dilated loss of rectal muscle tone. Death must be confirmed with cardiac standstill.

Owner Requested Euthanasia

As a service, FHS offers euthanasia for owned animals that are terminally ill. Owners are invited to remain with their animal throughout this process. Our protocol is the same for the animal whether or not the owner is with us. If the owner is present though, they should be informed ahead of time that sodium pentobarbital acts on the brain first so the animal feels no pain. They must be warned of the speed in which the animal will most likely lose consciousness, the unlikely possibility of the animal going through an excitement stage and/or requiring a second injection. After death has been confirmed, owners may be allowed a few moments alone with their pet to say their final goodbyes.

Body Disposal

The bodies of the deceased animals are placed in body bags and then set inside the assigned freezer. If an animal is slated for individual cremation or if an animal has come in DOA or was in such poor condition that it was euthanized prior to completion of stray period, that bag must be tagged with the necessary information. Twice per week the bodies are taken by an outside company for mass cremation.

Record Keeping and Legal Requirements

By law the pre-euthanasia anesthetics and the sodium pentobarbital must be stored in a securely locked cabinet within a securely locked room. Drug logs for all controlled substances must be maintained in accordance with Florida regulations and DEA regulations. These daily logs include the date of use, animal's identification, the technician's signature, the amount of drug used, and the drug balance. The shelter undergoes periodic inspections in which these logs are checked.

Notify management immediately upon any spillage or discrepancy within the drug records.

SECURITY OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

Controlled substances

- In accordance with Florida State Law, all controlled substances are to be kept securely locked and should never be accessible to the public or any unauthorized persons.
- Only staff members who have been adequately trained to use such supplies will have access to them.
- No controlled substance is to be removed from the Shelter unless we are providing a scheduled owner requested euthanasia within the owner's home. If this is to be performed, it requires pre-approval from management. All drugs must be signed out in the appropriate manner.
- A current license from The Drug Enforcement Agency is to be kept on file, but do not display the DEA license due to potential theft of information.
- The permit from Department of Professional Regulation must be displayed on a prominent wall.

Recordkeeping

- Each time any amount of a controlled substance is used it must be completely and accurately documented in a daily log located with the drugs. There are controlled drugs in the veterinary services area and in the euthanasia room.
- The following information must be documented according to the Drug Enforcement Agency: date, animal's identification number, and description of animal, amount used, balance remaining, technician, assistant and (if appropriate) reason for euthanasia (e.g., health, age, behavior).
- If drugs are used for surgical purposes or for euthanasia, the animal's PetPoint and paper record is to be updated
- Immediately report any discrepancy in the drug balance to the Executive Director or Medical Manager. Photograph if there is a spill.
- The techs will conduct regular checks of these logs to ensure proper accounting of substances is being followed.

Inventory

- All controlled drugs must be carefully inventoried.
- The general supply of drugs is locked in the main supply drug safe, and only Directors have access to the safe.
- Each time a shipment of a controlled drug is received, it should be immediately placed in the safe and the appropriate paperwork completed, to include matching the invoice with the order slip.
- Each bottle should be numbered in sequential order to allow for extra accounting oversight.
- An inventory log is kept in the main supply safe listing the type and amount of each controlled drug within.
- Each time a drug is removed from the safe, the person taking the drug is to mark it in the inventory log and then re-count the bottles and provide that tally in the log book. This helps keep the inventory accurate.
- All entries should be made in ink, and no entry should be erased or completely obliterated. Any discrepancy should be immediately reported to the Drug Enforcement Agency by the Medical staff or Executive Director. Forms and instructions are available on the DEA website.
- A complete inventory should be conducted twice annually and kept in the file, to be provided to any inspecting agent.

TELEPHONE INTERACTION

Make every effort to answer phones before the third ring. Even if FHS is not open, answer the phone when it rings. Check voice mail first thing in the morning and several times throughout the day. Telephone etiquette is important for establishing good community relations. In addition, the information line voice-mail system provides important information to individuals needing assistance with animal-related problems.

Answering Calls